

# Changing Perception: The Red Arrow Division in WWI

A Monograph

by

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## Abstract

Changing Perception: The Red Arrow Division in WWI, MAJ Justin A. Bierens, Michigan Army National Guard, 47 pages.

Upon entering WWI in April 1917, the US Army required a significant increase in operational size and capability. Historically, fear of a large standing army led to a precarious reliance on reserve forces to augment the active component in times of need. The National Defense Act of 1916 completed the transition of all state militias into the National Guard, reinforcing its position as the primary organized reserve within the formal defense architecture. The Guard of 1917 lacked operational capability, yet the 32nd Division quickly assembled, trained, and proved itself as one of the most skilled divisions in the American Expeditionary Force. Examination and analysis of mobilization, pre-war training, and staff development establishes the state of the division prior to arriving in France. Further analysis of the division's development in actual combat highlights its growth as a learning organization, commander's visualization and application of operational art, and how capable staffs enable both. Critical lessons applicable to National Guard mobilization emerge from analyzing the division's evolution.

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## Acronyms

AEF	American Expeditionary Forces
NDA	National Defense Act
NGA	National Guard Association
ROTC	Reserve Officers Training Corps

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## Introduction

The ultimate purpose of the American Army is the decisive defeat of the enemy, and not the mere passive result of the pure defensive. To realize this ultimate purpose, it is essential that every officer and soldier of these forces be imbued with the offensive spirit.

— General John J. Pershing, *Instructions on Tactical Disposition*

On the morning of September 26, 1918, General John J. Pershing commenced the largest operation conducted by American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in World War I. The Meuse-Argonne offensive directed General Pershing's First Army against the principle German lateral line of supply in order to render their defensive positions west and northwest of Sedan untenable.<sup>1</sup> Forty-seven days later, the AEF emerged victorious at the cost of 26,277 American lives. Only four divisions in the initial attack on September 26 possessed tangible combat experience, leading to varied results throughout the offensive. However, the 32nd (Red Arrow) Division proved to be one of the most capable and effective fighting units.

In the short period between America's emergence as a global power in the twentieth century and its entrance into World War I, industrial expansion and international political tensions led to a series of congressional reforms directly affecting the National Guard. The Militia Acts (Dick Act) of 1903 and 1908 defined the circumstances for National Guard federalization while simultaneously providing funding, equipment, training days, and a force construct mirroring the active Army.<sup>2</sup> The National Defense Act (NDA) of 1916 completed the transition of all state militias into the National Guard, reinforcing its position as the primary organized reserve within the formal architecture of US Army reserve forces. The act established the model of merging the National Guard and Army Reserve forces with the Regular Army in times of war and allowed the President to mobilize the National Guard in times of emergency. President Woodrow Wilson

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<sup>1</sup> *32d Division Summary of Operations in the World War* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1943), 34.

<sup>2</sup> Barry M. Stentiford, *The American Home Guard: The State Militia in the Twentieth Century* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2002), 12.

immediately ordered over 100,000 guardsmen to active service during the Mexican Border Crisis. Less than a year after deactivation, America declared war on Germany and the National Guard once again filled the gap in capability by providing seventeen of the forty-three divisions sent to Europe.<sup>3</sup>

The 32nd Division formed from Michigan and Wisconsin National Guard units. General William G. Haan assumed the arduous duty of manning, equipping, and training the newly formed division and its staff. Operational timelines allowed for five months of intense preparation prior to embarking for Europe and integration within the AEF. On February 16, 1918, the 32nd Division arrived in France and assumed duties as a replacement division unit under General Pershing. General Haan engaged in heated debate with General Pershing over his assignment and eventually convinced him to place the 32nd Division in a combat role. Ten months after forming, the division entered their first line on the front of Haute Alsace. Following its baptism of fire, the division fought in the Aisne-Marne and Oise-Aisne Campaigns earning the nickname “Les Terribles” for their regular and determined dislodgement of fortified German positions.

After four months of continuous fighting in three campaigns, the 32nd Division received orders of transfer to the First Army. On September 22, 1918, the division arrived in the Verdun sector and assumed the role of 5th Corps reserve. Following the initial attack during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, General Haan received orders to move forward and occupy the previous positions of the 37th Division. Subsequent orders moved the division in replacement of the 91st Division, positioning the unit’s front directly on the strongest position of the Hindenburg line: the Kreimhilde Stellung. On October 9, 1918, attack of the Hindenburg line commenced and twenty days of bitter fighting ensued resulting in penetration of the Hindenburg Line, capture of Cote Dame de Marie, and the defeat of eleven German divisions. Despite significant losses, the

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<sup>3</sup> Michael D. Doubler, *I Am the Guard a History of the Army National Guard, 1636-2000* (Washington, DC: Army National Guard, 2001), 141.

division then transferred to the US 3rd Corps to assist with the drive up the left bank of the Meuse River, its crossing, and the subsequent three-hundred kilometer march to the Rhine. Fourteen months after activation, the National Guard units of Michigan and Wisconsin coalesced into a decorated and efficient fighting machine under the leadership of Major General Haan.

Analysis of the 32nd Division's combat success within the constraints of operational requirements presents the question of maintaining National Guard readiness in order to allow its use as an effective operational reserve. How was the division able to mobilize, achieve readiness, and seize, retain, and exploit the initiative during the AEF's most significant offensives? Operationally, the question of how Major General Haan and his staff continually achieved success despite significant losses arises. How did the division's leadership establish and ensure continued readiness? How did Major General Haan synchronize the division's action in time, space, and purpose during mobilization, integration into the Western Front, and ultimately during combat operations in three critical offensives?

Understanding the answers to these questions is a study of National Guard mobilization and operational planning. This monograph attempts to explain the relationship between the two through analysis of the 32nd Division's organization and combat operations in World War I. The division's combat success provides operational planners relevant lessons on producing sustainable readiness and the application of operational art in a complex system.

## Literature Review

World War I led to substantial study into its causes, operations, and lasting effects. Within this broad spectrum of study and analysis, the National Guard appears as a small portion of the larger narrative. Conversely, historical studies of the National Guard treat World War I in the

same manner.<sup>4</sup> Effectively wading through the voluminous literature requires separation into two groups. The first group covers National Guard mobilization following the Mexican Border Crisis and the subsequent creation, training, and deployment of divisions into the AEF. The second covers operational employment within the war. Herein lies an analysis gap obscured through a seemingly causal set of events. Although mobilization on the Mexican border set conditions for rapid re-deployment of Guard forces in 1917, direct correlation of success in the trenches of Europe with previous operational use bypasses the mixture of leadership, training, and operational planning that led to combat success.

A century of historical study following World War I provides a difficult landscape as primary accounts from those directly involved in the conflict fall in the increasing shadow of professional scholarship. As studies increased, focus shifted from first-hand accounts to the broader origins of the conflict within a geopolitical context. To understand the analysis gap surrounding National Guard mobilization and combat success requires a broader consideration of the historiography of the war, the National Guard, and the operations in which they participated. Within this context, narrowing the scope to primary and secondary accounts of the 32nd Infantry Division's actions within the two groups mentioned above allows for detailed analysis of the overall hypothesis.

Following the Armistice in 1918, war histories circulated in the form of larger narratives designed to outline the various causes, oversight, and overall consequences. The form of the narrative lent itself to the view of whichever combatant presented it, often focusing on justification and national pride. Sidney B. Fay's *The Origins of the World War*, exemplifies the concentration of scholarship immediately following the war. Determined to find the causes, Fay

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew John Margis, *Ensuring Survival: How Mexican Border Service and World War I was Vital for the Survival of the National Guard System*, Master's Thesis, 2012, 9, accessed February 13, 2017, <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd>.

outlines the political and diplomatic aspects of the crisis in July 1914.<sup>5</sup> Historical works such as Fay's placed blame on a particular combatant which led to further studies within Germany, France, Britain, and Russia.

As the interwar years progressed, root cause analysis of the war continued with less emphasis on exploring mobilization and operational employment of forces. However, various studies emerged prior to World War II that focused on force structure and mobilization. Frederick L. Paxon's *America at War* is the most comprehensive analysis on the organization and achievement of American military forces within this period. Although his work serves as a systematic base in understanding American involvement, synthesis ultimately leads to a broader knowledge of the relationship between politics, policy, and emergent strategy.

Within this trope, the National Guard received little mention or analysis outside of its place within the broader machine of the AEF. Edward Coffman's *The War to End All Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I*, outlines the development of American forces and the AEF. Brief mention of the National Guard revolves around the 1916 National Defense Authorization Act.<sup>6</sup> Despite synthesizing vast information of common knowledge, Coffman focuses on the war's impact at the individual level after outlining the force structure. This similar theme carries through much of the scholarship in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Historical approaches centered on the human experience dominate much of the recent literature. Joseph Lawrence and Robert Ferrill published *Fighting Soldier: The AEF in 1918* in 1985, demonstrating the shift in focus through narrative history of Lawrence's experiences during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.<sup>7</sup> Specific to the 32nd Division, more recent works illustrate the

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<sup>5</sup> Sidney B. Fay, *The Origins of the World War* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), Vol 1.

<sup>6</sup> Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), chapters 1 and 4.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Douglas Lawrence and Robert H. Ferrell, *Fighting Soldier: The AEF in 1918* (Boulder, CO: Colorado Associated University Press, 1985).

emphasis on human experience. Horace L. Baker's *Argonne Days in World War I*, and John W. Barry's *The Midwest goes to War: The 32nd Division in the Great War*, both contain histories of the division which quickly shift to emphasize the suffering experienced at the soldier level. Overall, specific studies into the relationship between National Guard mobilization and battlefield success do not exist within the broad spectrum of World War I histories.

Despite its roots dating back to colonial militias, specific historical studies of the National Guard emerged during the mid-twentieth century. Most notable is Jim Dan Hill's *The Minute Man in Peace and War: A History of the National Guard*, which spans the timeframe between the Revolutionary War and the mid nineteenth sixties. Hill's focus is a general history of the National Guard with the intent of illustrating its evolution from humble beginnings to professional status.<sup>8</sup> In this context, World War I is one event amid a more comprehensive set of experiences. More recent studies mirror Hill's, building on the history acquired by the National Guard following his initial work. Michael Doubler's *I Am the Guard: A History of the Army National Guard, 1636-2000*, focuses on the federal role and use to include historical friction between National Guard and active Army units. Against the backdrop of comprehensive and broad historical studies, National Guard histories do little to examine the specifics of mobilization and its link with combat success.

Literature specific to divisions, their formation, and subsequent combat action focus primarily on succinct records of events and narratives of the battles. The historical section of the Army War College published *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War* in 1931 summarizing each division force structure within the AEF.<sup>9</sup> A detailed record of events outlines the division's actions to include its composition, disposition, and strength throughout each phase of the war. A more specific study appeared in 1943 when The American Battle

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<sup>8</sup> Jim Dan Hill and George Fielding Eliot, *The Minute Man in Peace and War; a History of the National Guard* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1964).

<sup>9</sup> *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War: American Expeditionary Forces: Divisions* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1931), 176-191.

Monuments Commission published a summary of operations regarding the 32nd Division in 1943.<sup>10</sup> Although exclusively written for the 32nd Division, the summary remains objective yet provides a detailed list of primary sources.

The primary sources for this study thus focus on firsthand accounts from the commanders and staff, supplemented where necessary by independent studies specific to each combat action within the broader body of historical documents. Major General William Haan published various documents immediately following the war, which provide specific detail into the mobilization, training, and combat use of the division. General Haan's "The Division as a Fighting Machine" outlines the division's organization, theory of training, initial use in combat, and its ultimate test in the Meuse-Argonne.<sup>11</sup> Coupled with operations orders, battlefield reports, and historical studies such as Edward Lengel's *To Conquer Hell: The Meuse Argonne, 1918*, the connection between mobilization, training, and combat success emerges. Within the vast literature outlined above, an examination bringing the three together does not exist.

## Methodology

This study analyzes four periods in chronological order within the 32nd Infantry Division's participation in World War I. Prior to the first period, a brief overview of National Guard evolution up to 1917 provides context for the analysis. The first period starts using the division's force structure following the Mexican Border Crisis and ends with its incorporation into the French XXXVII Corps in preparation for the division's first major combat action. The first section focuses on the twelve-month period between July 15, 1917 and July 15, 1918. During this period, the division organized and trained, conducted its movement to France, performed duties as I Corps

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<sup>10</sup> American Battle Monuments Commission, *32d Division Summary of Operations in the World War* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1943).

<sup>11</sup> William G. Haan. "The Division as a Fighting Machine: What It Is, How Prepared from Its Inception to Its Action in Battle, and Its Troubles and Pleasures in Its Hardest Day's Fight, from the Viewpoint of the Division Commander." *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 4, no. 1 (1920): 3-26.

replacement division, and affiliated with the French. Detailed analysis of mobilization efforts and training allows for identification of the essential elements in reserve mobilization, how the division organized, and overall effectiveness of both. Particular attention is given to the commander and his staff to determine how operational planners administratively arranged actions in time, space, and purpose to prepare the division for combat operations. Also reviewed is the division's movement overseas and the final training conducted prior to affiliating with the French.

The second section focuses on the division's participation in the Aisne-Marne operation from July 30, 1918 to August 27, 1918. Specifically, the section analyzes the first operational employment as an indicator of successful mobilization and training efforts. As well, General Haan's leadership and staff proficiency emerges for analysis as the Division incurs its first losses yet sustains readiness for future operations. Further, the section analyzes the divisions actions overall in the face of a determined enemy.

The third section focuses on the division's participation in the Oise-Aisne operation from August 28, 1918 to September 2, 1918, including its repositioning for the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. Analysis in this section intends to identify the operational planning of the staff and further investigates the division's ability to sustain readiness and produce continued success. Despite suffering numerous casualties in the Aisne-Marne operation, the division repositioned and immediately entered another. Following this combat action, the division earned the nickname "Les Terribles" for their fierce and determined fighting spirit.

The final section focuses on the division's most significant test during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive from September 26, 1918 to November 11, 1918. Although the division sustained over 7,000 casualties prior to the offensive, its most significant successes reside within the Meuse-Argonne. Analysis of General Haan's theory of "The Division as a Fighting Machine" in conjunction with the operational planning of his staff leads to an inclusive analysis.



Overall, the study searches for useful lessons in National Guard mobilization and training and the effective application of operational art leading to significant battlefield success.

## The 32<sup>nd</sup> Division in WWI

### The National Guard of 1917: A Brief History

The early years of the twentieth century marked significant change in what started as the colonial militia system. The citizen-soldier concept arrived in America with the colonists embodied in the English militia tradition.<sup>12</sup> The requirement for defense of the colonies led to the establishment of thirteen separate militias, creating a system in which each answered to the specific colonial government. Combining the militias to combat a unified threat proved difficult within this construct as each unit developed its own character and varied in levels of training. Following the revolution, the principles and establishments that defined the role of the military in American life reflected one hundred and fifty years of militia tradition.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the success of the Continental Army, fear of a large standing military stemmed from its resonance with the fundamental reasons revolution occurred. Standing armies of paid soldiers within peaceful societies might subvert the liberties of the people they intended to defend.<sup>14</sup> The resulting framework centered on obligatory service of the citizen who would volunteer and maintain a level of training catalyzed through the militia. A standing army of minimal size would offset immediate threats and provide the necessary buffer for mobilization of individual state militias. Although this framework theoretically provided for the national defense, inherent debate ignited over its realistic application. Specifically, the geographic location of each militia coupled with its historical oversight at the state level created conditions in which political interests emerged.

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<sup>12</sup> Jeffrey A. Jacobs, *The Future of the Citizen-Soldier Force: Issues and Answers* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 27.

<sup>13</sup> Henry C. Dethloff and Gerald E. Shenk, *Citizen and Soldier: A Sourcebook On Military Service and National Defense from Colonial America to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2010), 8.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

The system that combined a federal government with regional governments required a detailed delineation of how to execute the concept.

In May of 1792, the Second US Congress enacted a pair of statutes to address the conceptual disconnect. The Militia Act set parameters for calling forth the militia to execute laws of the union, suppress insurrections, and repel invasions. This placed the citizen-soldier in the center of the US defense apparatus and set the character of military service that continued through the nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, the framework created emergent and unintended effects within the greater political system. Control of the militias remained at the state level despite federal reliance on their conglomeration for defense. Partisan politics quickly exploited the gap, causing Congress to relinquish all militia oversight to state governments. The results were disparate levels of organization and training leading to low levels of readiness and general ineffectiveness. As well, command structures began to mirror the class system and regularly aligned with the dominant political party in each state.

The War of 1812 exposed the weakness of the system when congress authorized the use of one hundred thousand militiamen.<sup>16</sup> The first test of the system showed that several militias could not function as a national reserve when a governor and the president disagreed on policy.<sup>17</sup> Further, lessons from the war pointed to the detail that untrained troops, whether militia, volunteer, or regular, are unsatisfactory and expensive.<sup>18</sup> As well, it showed that preparation for war requires a certain minimum time, and efficient peacetime training requirements must be in place if the militia is employed immediately upon mobilization.

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<sup>15</sup> Dethloff and Shenk, *Citizen and Soldier: A Sourcebook On Military Service and National Defense from Colonial America to the Present*, 29.

<sup>16</sup> Jacobs, *The Future of the Citizen-Soldier Force: Issues and Answers*, 29.

<sup>17</sup> John K. Mahon, *History of the Militia and the National Guard* (New York: Macmillan, 1983), 68.

<sup>18</sup> Marvin A. Kreidberg, LTC and Merton G. Henry, 1LT, *History of Military Mobilization in the United States Army: 1775-1945* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1955), 60.

The reliance on militia forces did not negate the evolution of a professional army, and the lessons learned in 1812 became the platform to lobby for a greater standing force as opposed to driving change within the established system. The nineteenth century thus saw the slow but steady increase of professional officers and soldiers. Tension between the citizen-soldier and the regular resulted as officers from each refused to subordinate their units to each other. The regular looked at the militia and volunteers with disdain while militiamen expressed discontent due to a lack of recognition.<sup>19</sup>

The rift between Regular Army officers and soldiers and the militiamen continued throughout the nineteenth century. Following the war of 1812, General Winfield Scott's experience with militia and volunteer units led him to conclude that irreparable and systemic disorganization plagued the citizen-soldier policy. Despite these views, the use of volunteers and militia to offset Regular Army shortages continued due to congressional reluctance to institute conscription or fund a larger army. Lessons from the Mexican-American War reiterated those exposed in 1812, and foreshadowed complications in the Civil War. The inability of the militia to provide the necessary reservoir of manpower became more apparent. The inefficiencies in the state-federal relationship coupled with state-level funding constraints led the militia system to the verge of extinction.<sup>20</sup>

The Civil War reinvigorated the use of state governments as the medium for recruiting and equipping soldiers. Militia and volunteer units fought on both sides of the war and their conflict with Regular Army units continued. The class system and political nature of appointing officers led to poorly trained units that performed in the same manner. Following the war, the militia system seemed politically impractical, yet volunteers remained a critical necessity.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Jacobs, *The Future of the Citizen-Soldier Force: Issues and Answers*, 30.

<sup>20</sup> Kreidberg and Henry, *History of Military Mobilization in the United States Army: 1775-1945*, 82.

<sup>21</sup> Mahon, *History of the Militia and the National Guard*, 126.

This reiterated the lesson that the militia system lacked the ability to produce necessary manpower.<sup>22</sup>

The period following the Civil War maintained the early Jeffersonian idea that the responsibility for national defense rested on the shoulders of the citizen-soldier.<sup>23</sup> Maintaining the citizen-soldier armies remained a state-level responsibility, however Congress recognized the need for increasing capability to ease pressures in the event of large mobilizations. As a more formalized militia system formed in conjunction with the increased capabilities provided in the 1870's, many militia units began adopting the name National Guard. Despite control remaining at the state level, militia officers recognized the need to bridge the gap with federal authorities in order to increase funding and readiness. In 1877, the National Guard Association (NGA) formed, lending credence to the name while establishing a powerful lobby that argued the National Guard was an essential component of the nation's defense.<sup>24</sup> Further, officers sought to shed the perception of the militia as inefficient and class oriented. The association encountered fierce criticism in response to their argument and lobbying. At the federal level, the counter-argument centered on a homogeneous military establishment controlled by regular officers.<sup>25</sup> The debate continued through the latter portion of the nineteenth century resulting in little change and virtually no military policy at all.<sup>26</sup>

The pivotal transition catalyzing change in military policy occurred following the Spanish-American War of 1898 and continued through 1916. The war illuminated policy shortfalls regarding the military as a whole, however it particularly demonstrated the National Guard's poor

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<sup>22</sup> Kreidberg and Henry, *History of Military Mobilization in the United States Army: 1775-1945*, 139.

<sup>23</sup> Dethloff and Shenk, *Citizen and Soldier: A Sourcebook On Military Service and National Defense from Colonial America to the Present*, 48.

<sup>24</sup> Jacobs, *The Future of the Citizen-Soldier Force: Issues and Answers*, 31.

<sup>25</sup> Mahon, *History of the Militia and the National Guard*, 119.

<sup>26</sup> Russell Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 278.

state of readiness.<sup>27</sup> As the United States emerged as a global power, home defense became defense of the nation and citizen-soldiers augmented the small standing army. The militias and volunteers mobilized in a widely scattered fashion across the US with little organization. The lack of prepared forces and the hasty mobilization narrowly avoided disastrous consequences resulting in widespread movement to reorganize the military establishment.<sup>28</sup> The inefficient system, still operating under the auspices of the Militia Act of 1792, finally stood at the precipice of change.

Elihu Root became the Secretary of War following the Spanish-American conflict and sought dramatic reform in the militia system.<sup>29</sup> Central to Root's ideas of change was the irrationality of reliance on a militia system governed by a one hundred and ten year old statute. Charles Dick, Chairman of the House Committee on Military Affairs appointed a committee to draft a bill creating clear linkage with the federal government. Dick, a general in the National Guard himself, haggled with Root regarding the exact allocation and disposition of National Guard units. However, the two reached agreement and in 1903 the Efficiency in Militia Act (commonly referred to as the Dick Act) passed in Congress. The act codified the circumstances in which National Guard units would federalize and included direct funding for equipment and training.<sup>30</sup> In turn, the National Guard began to align its formations in the same manner of Regular Army units and became accountable for the same training requirements. Revisions to the act occurred in the years that followed, with the primary reform in 1908. This revision repealed the nine-month deployment limit, allowing the President to set deployment length, and deploy the National Guard outside of the continental United States.<sup>31</sup> As well, the amendment stated that the National Guard

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<sup>27</sup> William H. Riker, *Soldiers of the States: The Role of the National Guard in American Democracy* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1957), 69.

<sup>28</sup> Dethloff and Shenk, *Citizen and Soldier: A Sourcebook On Military Service and National Defense from Colonial America to the Present*, 173.

<sup>29</sup> Jacobs, *The Future of the Citizen-Soldier Force: Issues and Answers*, 34.

<sup>30</sup> US Congress, Act of Jan. 21, 1903, 47th Congress, 2nd session, chapter 196, 32 Stat. 775-780.

<sup>31</sup> *Republican Campaign Manual* (Washington, DC: Republican National Committee, 1908), 359.

required federalization before organizing volunteer units. Overall, the Dick Act brought about significant improvement in National Guard training and readiness and set conditions for its use as an effective reserve.<sup>32</sup>

Despite successful reforms, opponents of the Guard continued to oppose the Dick Act. The newly created Guard system raised constitutional questions surrounding the “organized militia” and “unorganized militia,” leading many to argue for a national reserve based system.<sup>33</sup> Congress and the NGA vehemently opposed this idea and continued work on solidifying the system. Resulting legislation culminated in the National Defense Act (NDA) of 1916. The NDA of 1916 further refined the Dick Act by expanding both the National Guard and regular forces to include the creation of a Reserve force and the Reserve Officers Training Course (ROTC) program. Critical to the legislation were the provisions allowing the National Guard to use federal funding to pay for forty-eight training periods and two weeks of annual training. The act also included expanded authority for the President to federalize the National Guard. Passed amidst national turmoil surrounding Francisco “Pancho” Villa’s cross-border raid on Columbus, New Mexico, the act allowed President Woodrow Wilson to immediately test the new system.

Two weeks after the NDA passed, the National Guard received its first call within the construct of the new system. Units from Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona immediately mobilized and sent forces to the border. By the end of June 1916, one hundred and ten thousand Guardsmen would mobilize in Texas. The immediacy of mobilizations following the NDA caught many states unprepared and quickly exposed the historical complications of rapidly organizing soldiers with civilian obligations. However, with the National Guard now firmly established and connected to the

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<sup>32</sup> Russell Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), 221.

<sup>33</sup> B. M. Chipfield, "The Legal Status of the National Guard under the Army Reorganization Bill," *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology* 7, no. 5 (1917): 672-6, doi:10.2307/1133721.

federal military apparatus, shared responsibility for mobilization between states and the federal government required mutual oversight.

Service on the Mexican border proved beneficial to the system as well as the soldier. Although soldiers expected combat, upon arriving they settled into border patrols and various training programs.<sup>34</sup> The training allowed units to coalesce and endure hardship, while the mobilization process exposed equipment and logistical shortfalls.<sup>35</sup> The National Guard units returned home having learned the hard lessons of ensuring equipment readiness and accountability, verifying soldier deployability, and the need for detailed mobilization procedures.<sup>36</sup>

The National Guard of 1917, despite its recent structural renovations and mobilization, in no way resembled a capable, ready reserve with the ability to form division level organizations. Over two hundred years of citizen-soldier tradition existed, yet the historical execution of militia and volunteer units led many to expect the same outcomes during World War I. However, National Guard divisions met and exceeded expectations amidst the same frustrations and constraints outlined in this brief history. The following analysis of the 32nd Division aims to determine why.

## Preparation for War & Baptism of Fire: 15 July 1917 – 15 July 1918

The United States declared war on Germany and its allies on April 6, 1917. Two months later, the Michigan and Wisconsin National Guards received the War Department directive to combine as a division of two infantry brigades, a field artillery brigade, and divisional troops and trains elements (see appendix 1). In 1917, the idea of organizing Regular Army and National Guard

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<sup>34</sup> Alexander F. Barnes, "On the Border: The National Guard Mobilizes for War in 1916," [www.army.mil](https://www.army.mil/article/162413), February 29, 2016, accessed December 14, 2016, <https://www.army.mil/article/162413>.

<sup>35</sup> Moses Thisted, Col, "With The Wisconsin National Guard on the Mexican Border, 1916-1917," *Milwaukee Journal*, 1917, 29.

<sup>36</sup> Charles H. Harris and Louis R. Saddler, *The Great Call-Up: The Guard, The Border, and The Mexican Revolution* (Place of publication not identified: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 93.

units into field armies made up of three divisions of three brigades each remained a paper concept.<sup>37</sup> Both components favored the predominant regimental model that allowed units to develop internal traditions and standards. This led to a small and frontier-oriented force that required innovation in both training and education in order to match the capabilities of an experienced German Army.<sup>38</sup> General Pershing recognized the shortfalls and feared the current structure foreshadowed a blending of AEF units under British and French commanders. He thus directed the creation of 'square divisions' numbering 28,000 men augmented with proficient firepower and sustainment assets. US Army divisions exceeded their European counterparts in both size and capability on paper; however, ensuring they fought under an American command depended on the ability to field them rapidly.<sup>39</sup>

The 32nd Division began assembling in Camp MacArthur, Waco, TX, in August 1917. It was at this time that units from each state officially entered federal service and the National Guard transitioned out of state control all together. Despite the growth associated with this action, the US Government faced a critical shortage in force availability and estimated a need for 800,000 additional troops to meet the needs of the Western Front.<sup>40</sup> As a result, the United States enacted its first major draft leading to the delineation of division's into three distinct groups. Although forty-two divisions entered the war, initial force structure allocations called for ninety-two divisions overall. Regular Army divisions numbered one through twenty, however only eight reached France before the armistice. The National Guard divisions numbered twenty-one through forty-two, and

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<sup>37</sup> Thomas F. Burdett, "Mobilizations of 1911 and 1913: Their Role in the Development of the Modern Army," *Military Review*, July 1974, 66.

<sup>38</sup> Leonard Porter Ayres, *The War With Germany: A Statistical Summary* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1919), 25-26.

<sup>39</sup> John J. Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War* (New York: Stokes, 1931), I:30-33.

<sup>40</sup> John S. D. Eisenhower, *Yanks: The Epic Story of the American Army in World War I* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 23.



the National Army divisions numbered seventy-two through ninety-two.<sup>41</sup> Regular and National Guard Divisions received conscripted and volunteer augmentees, however the selective service recruits mainly comprised divisions in the National Army. Overall, the rapid construction of forces in a new format produced significant challenges as commanders and their staffs lacked experience in consolidating, organizing, and training divisions for combat.

Initial organization and training of the 32nd Division fell on the shoulders of General James Parker. As a Regular Army officer, Parker earned a distinguished reputation in both combat and training. Shortly after assuming command, he received orders to France on September 17, 1917, for special duty. He returned the following December and immediately transferred to the 85th Division at Camp Custer, Michigan. This transferred the burden of organization to the senior brigadier general by virtue of Regular Army commission, General William G. Haan.<sup>42</sup> Upon taking command, Hann immediately began reorganizing the division and establishing his primary staff. Initial efforts focused on realigning units within the division construct in a way that conserved the existing continuity of Michigan and Wisconsin regiments. Newly trained conscripts and volunteers filled manning gaps across the formation as they became available.

Systematic training of the division began on September 29, 1917. General Haan focused training for the soldiers and staff on offensive operations. British and French tactics in the war concentrated on preparing a defensive battle that corresponded to the offensive method practiced by the enemy. The tactic aimed to disorganize the enemy command by disrupting the advance in multiple areas. Although the division received initial training instructions from the Army War College that stated, “Trench warfare is of paramount importance,” the War Department revoked the order and General Pershing rejected the idea of furthering trench-focused doctrine.<sup>43</sup> Instead,

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<sup>41</sup> Ayers, *The War With Germany: A Statistical Analysis*, 27.

<sup>42</sup> Joint War Commissions of Michigan and Wisconsin, comp., *The 32nd Division in the World War, 1917-1919* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin War History Commission, 1920), 28.

<sup>43</sup> Hann, *The Division as a Fighting Machine*, 5.

Pershing embraced a concept of open warfare that emphasized driving the enemy into the open and engaging in a war of movement that relied on initiative, resourcefulness, and judgement.<sup>44</sup>

Despite doctrinal fluctuation, General Haan embraced Pershing's concept and developed the division along three lines of effort that accounted for both the offense and defense. The three lines included tactical doctrine, management of personnel and equipment, and training philosophies. As an experienced officer, Haan understood that harmonious action on the battlefield resulted from the acceptance of a body of ideas that governed the conduct of warfare. General Haan stated,

From the beginning it was one of my principle functions to keep before the eyes and minds of the officers and men the fact that the Thirty-second Division was going to fight; that all of our training must be conducted with that end constantly in view; and that only such officers should accompany the Division to France as by their physical fitness, their age, and their aptitude for commanding men in battle were considered fully qualified for leading against the enemy the splendid men of which the Division was to be comprised.<sup>45</sup>

Accomplishing this required intense and standardized training at all levels. Sixteen weeks of infantry training commenced to include the establishment of an infantry school of arms that taught selected officers and non-commissioned officers various specialties.<sup>46</sup> The division also received French and British instructors who ensured the training mirrored the realities of the Western Front. Troops drilled relentlessly in all weather conditions leading to standardization while simultaneously instilling "the right frame of mind, the right kind of morale, and the right kind of esprit de corps."<sup>47</sup>

Managing personnel and equipment occurred in the same strenuous manner. Rigid discipline in all aspects of daily life became second nature. Every event occurred "by the numbers,"

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<sup>44</sup> John J. Pershing, *Final Report of Gen. John J. Pershing, Commander in Chief, American Expeditionary Forces* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1919), 14; Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, I: 152.

<sup>45</sup> Hann, *The Division as a Fighting Machine*, 4.

<sup>46</sup> Joint War Commissions, *The 32nd Division in the World War, 1917-1919*, 30.

<sup>47</sup> Hann, *The Division as a Fighting Machine*, 6.

and within a short period a demonstrated willingness to implicitly obey orders revealed a thoroughly disciplined organization.<sup>48</sup> To facilitate the expansion of knowledge within the officer corps, Haan developed a system of schooling and professional development that specifically targeted all grades. For junior officers, specialty schools focused on teaching the basic tenets of small unit leadership. Company commanders attended nightly courses while brigade, regimental, and battalion commanders attended daily courses taught by General Haan himself. Similar special instruction existed within the non-commissioned officer ranks, and in many cases those who showed exceptional ability received commissions as second lieutenants. The critical backbone leading to successful implementation of training and personnel management policies stemmed from integration of each brigade commander in their creation. Execution of any division wide policy occurred only after full consultation and agreement among the commanders.<sup>49</sup> As a result, the environment and leadership climate within the division generated shared understanding of General Haan's vision leading to rapid growth in capability and cohesion.

The philosophy behind General Haan's training and personnel management directly related to his visualization of the division as a diverse and interconnected system within a larger system. From the beginning, he focused on the kind of fighting the division would face to,

produce from a conglomeration of men, animals, and material a machine which would carry out in battle the single idea of a single mind, itself controlled by instructions from the higher command, making this smallest fighting unit of all arms, the division, in itself work as a single element in conjunction with hundreds of other similar elements that made up the great Allied Army, which again was finally controlled by a single mind.<sup>50</sup>

While the commanders developed the capability and discipline to achieve this, Haan saw the division staff as the nerve center of the entire organization. Prompt response of the division in combat relied on the staff's capability to disseminate orders through an efficient communications

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<sup>48</sup> Joint War Commissions, *The 32nd Division in the World War, 1917-1919*, 31.

<sup>49</sup> Hann, *The Division as a Fighting Machine*, 4.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

system. Fighting a war of movement required staff officers to operate in a fluid, complex, and ambiguous environment.

In 1917, staff officers lacked capability in planning and conducting large-scale operations. The 32nd Division staff organized under the traditional staff system outlined in the 1917 Staff Manual for the primary purpose of coordinating training and logistic requirements.<sup>51</sup> This served the near term objective of preparing the division to deploy, however there existed no crucible of training for field grade officers that tested their ability within dynamic and complex operations. This capability gap spanned the entire Army, leading General Pershing to issue General Order Number 8, which outlined the organization of the AEF staff as well as how subordinate staffs must function.<sup>52</sup> In addition to adjusting staff composition, creation of the American Staff College in Langres, France, aimed to produce officers capable of staffing divisions in a manner that matched requirements on the Western Front. Officers trained at the American Staff College proved critical for the 32nd Division upon its arrival in France.

In late November 1917, General Haan received orders for movement overseas following War Department examination. Reports from the artillery and infantry inspectors noted that the division was more advanced in its training than any other division in the United States.<sup>53</sup> The advanced party arrived in Brest, France, on January 24, 1918. Thirty days later, the division headquarters established itself in Prauthoy, Haute Marne, France. General Pershing designated the area of Prauthoy as the 32nd training ground, and by mid-March the entire division consolidated.

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<sup>51</sup> Headquarters, Department of War, *Staff Manual* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1917), 21.

<sup>52</sup> Headquarters, American Expeditionary Force, "General Order Number Eight," In *General Order, General Headquarters, American Expeditionary Forces*, vol. 16 of *The United States Army in the World War, 1917-1919* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, 1988) 13-24. The general order resulted from a contingent of officers dispatched by General Pershing to France in May of 1917.

<sup>53</sup> Joint War Commissions, *The 32nd Division in the World War, 1917-1919*, 32.

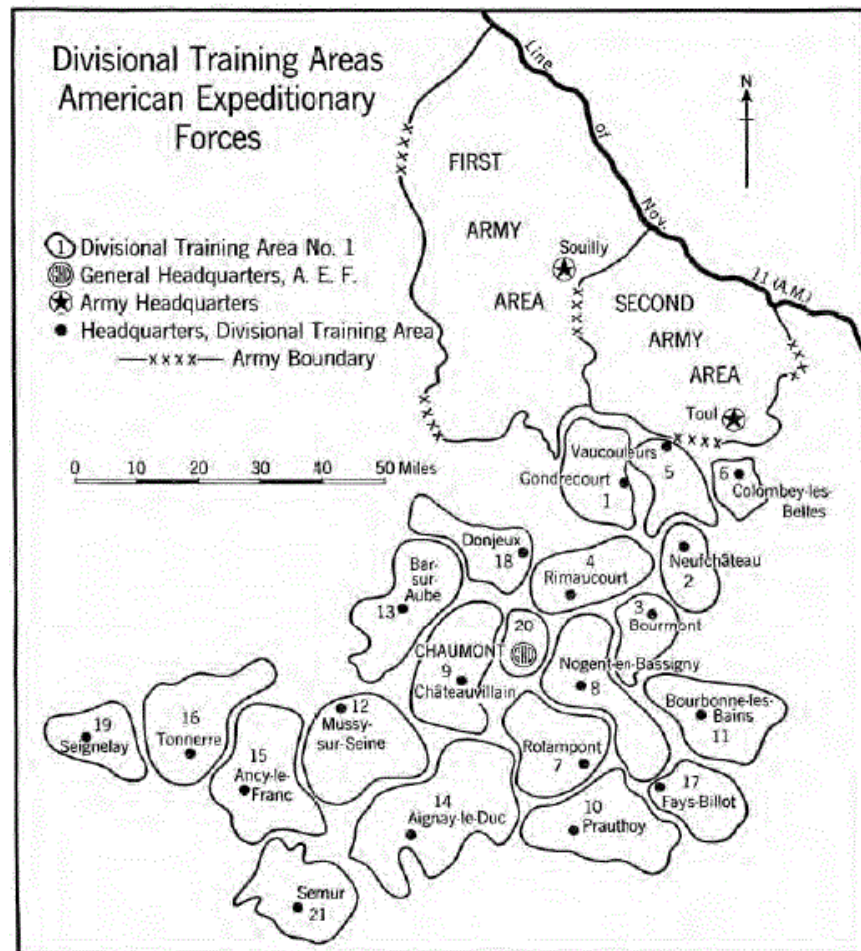


Figure 1. Divisional Training Areas. US Army Center of Military History, *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe: A History, Guide, and Reference Book*, CMH Publication 23-24 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1992), 68.

Per the AEF's initial plans, the sixth division to arrive in theater assumed duties as a replacement organization for the 1st Army Corps. Having arrived in France 3,000 men understrength, replacement duties immediately required the transfer of 7,000 soldiers to the 1<sup>st</sup> Division. Despite losing the entire 128th Infantry Regiment, General Haan remained steadfast in his belief that the 32nd Division deserved a position on the front. After presenting his case to the General Staff, the 32nd transferred replacement duties to the 41st Division.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup> John W. Barry, *The Midwest Goes to War: The 32nd Division in the Great War* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 32. General Haan, a West Point classmate of General Pershing, researched the General Orders of the AEF and prepared written arguments. After receiving permission to visit the AEF staff, Haan visited Colonel W.D. Connor and presented him with the opportunity of promotion within the 32nd. At the expense of losing Colonel E.H. DeArmond, Connor assumed duties as Chief of Staff after assisting in the

As the division reconstituted, the German Spring offensive commenced with the aim of separating the British and French by driving the British back to the English Channel. The 32nd increased training efforts and received its final inspection by General Pershing in May, 1918. On May 15, the division began moving toward Alsace-Lorraine with the French 9th and 10th Divisions for the occupation of the Centre Sector (Alsace). The division deployed near Belfort as the first American unit on Allied-conquered territory.<sup>55</sup>

In preparing the 32nd for combat, General Haan's visualization of the division as a system provided him with a critical mental model. This model consisted of identifying the structural and interactive complexity of the organization and then combining the two for optimal results.<sup>56</sup> In doing this, he cultivated an understanding that allowed him to influence action in critical areas, leading to the most disciplined and well-trained division in the shortest period.<sup>57</sup> Continued clarification and deepening of personal vision coupled with the incorporation of commanders and staffs into all divisional policies built shared understanding and enabled team learning. As a result, the 32nd Division entered the Belfort Pass on May 20, 1918, a learning organization.

The AEF deliberately placed the 32nd Division in Alsace as part of General Pershing's overall training plan. The plan called for introducing units to the Western Front in relatively quiet sectors to allow a gradual acclimation and learning through experience. Upon entering Alsace, the

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establishment of the American Staff College. Not long after arriving, Connor promoted to Brigadier General and assumed command of the 63rd Brigade. This political move, in conjunction with the German spring offensives and arguments to General Pershing, resulted in the 32nd receiving orders to reconstitute as a combat division.

<sup>55</sup> Joint War Commissions, *The 32nd Division in the World War, 1917-1919*, 43. Historical accounts of the 32nd claim that the division was the first to set foot on German soil due to Alsace being a part of Germany when the war started in 1914.

<sup>56</sup> TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5-500, *The United States Army Commander's Appreciation and Campaign Design* (Fort Monroe, VA: US Army Training and Doctrine Command, 28 January 2008), Chapter 1. Structural complexity refers to the number of parts within a system, while interactive complexity is based upon the behavior of the parts and the resulting interactions between them.

<sup>57</sup> Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 6-11.

division altered its focus on mobility and movement to a more stable defensive posture under French command.<sup>58</sup> Although this countered the training philosophy instilled within the division from its inception, it served to accomplish General Pershing's intent of gradual preparation through familiarity. From May through July, all infantry regiments served in the trenches of Alsace.

The division quickly improved on the lessons of combining maneuver and fire support. As well, staff officers received critical repetitions in synchronizing actions in time and space to ensure the sector remained manned and equipped at all times. Gradual replacement of staff officers with those educated in the American Staff College began when the division arrived in France, and their ability to handle, equip, and fight larger formations became apparent in Alsace. By mid-July the proficiency of the 32nd led to General Haan assuming tactical command of the sector and the implementation of offensive operations.<sup>59</sup> The tour in Alsace ended on July 20, 1918, with the soldiers and officers experiencing their baptism of fire. In total, the division lost three-hundred and sixty eight men while facing three German divisions.<sup>60</sup>

## Into the Big Fight: Aisne - Marne, 27 July 1918 – 6 August 1918

While the 32nd Division gained its initial combat experience in Alsace, the German Spring offensive continued to drive deep salients in the allied lines.<sup>61</sup> The Imperial German Army intended to defeat British and French forces before the AEF could field its divisions on the Western Front. The initial attack threatened the critical rail networks in vicinity of Amiens in conjunction with a secondary attack along the Lys River.

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<sup>58</sup> Barry, *The Midwest Goes to War: The 32nd Division in the Great War*, 35.

<sup>59</sup> Joint War Commissions, *The 32nd Division in the World War, 1917-1919*, 43.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>61</sup> American Battle Monuments Commission, *32d Division Summary of Operations in the World War*, 6.



On May 27, a third attack commenced northwest of Reims allowing the German Army to cross the Aisne, Vesle, and Ourcq Rivers and advance on the Marne. In reaching the Marne River the Germans turned toward Paris, then merely fifty miles away.<sup>62</sup>

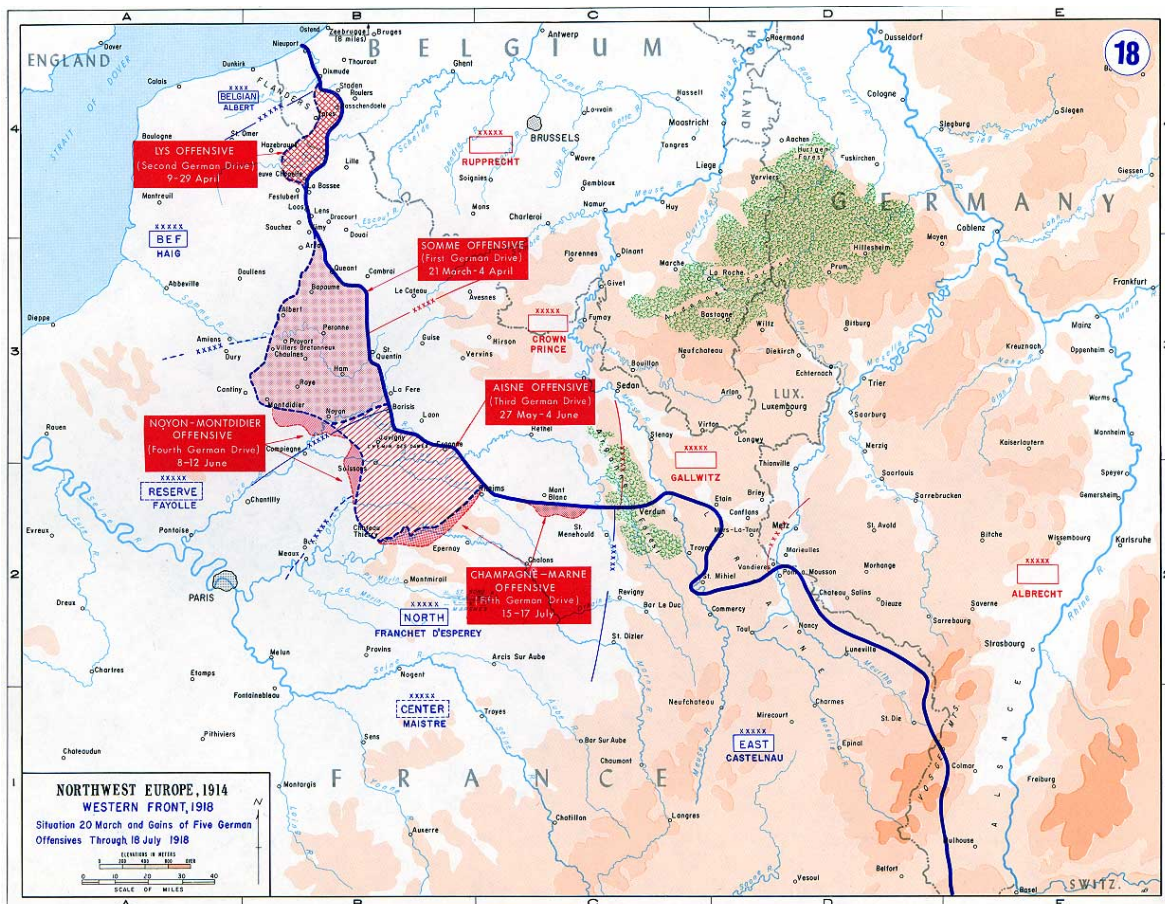


Figure 2. German Offensives, Spring 1918. West Point Atlases, Western Front, 1918, accessed 16 March 2017, <http://www.usma.edu/history/SiteAssets/SitePages/World%20War%20I/WWOne18.jpg>.

Subsequent German attempts to widen the salient yielded marginal gains, however the strain on Allied forces required AEF divisions to assist on parts of the front line. Reduction of the Marne salient became an Allied objective prior to the final German offensive, and once it became evident that the German attacks culminated, the Aisne-Marne Offensive commenced. The operational plan consisted of a two-pronged attack. The French 10th Army attacked the west face of

<sup>62</sup> American Battle Monuments Commission, *32d Division Summary of Operations in the World War*, 6.



the salient cutting critical enemy communication lines through Soissons. The 6th French Army attacked the tip of the salient while supporting the 10th with its left flank. The counterattack met success, and the German army began withdrawing from the salient, occupying defensive lines as they moved.

The 32nd Division left Alsace on July 22 with orders to the Chateau-Thierry region in order to assist in reclamation of the Marne salient. Moving by rail, fifty trains transported the division to the front over a forty-eight hour period.<sup>63</sup> By July 24, the division consolidated southwest of Soissons as the reserve of the 10th French Army. Two days later, General Haan received orders to report to the 38th French Corps of the 6th French Army near the tip of the salient.<sup>64</sup> On July 29, the division began its move toward the front in order to relieve the US 3rd Division and elements of the 28th Division near the Ourcq River. General Haan noted the importance of the division's engagement in his personal account of the offensive:

When on the twenty-ninth of July our Division relieved the Third Division, then for the first time it became the duty of the Division Commander to make a plan of battle and of his staff to prepare the battle orders. Here, then, was to be put to the test whether or not our doctrine of training for fighting on the offensive had been correct – whether we were going to take the offensive in battle, or whether we were to remain on the defensive.<sup>65</sup>

The 32nd Division's mission centered on assuming the offense from 3rd Division in order to immediately capture the town of Cierges, Hill 230, fifteen-hundred meters northeast of Cierges, and the town of Coulonges. In assuming the offense, General Haan took command of the sector with administrative control of the division under the French 3rd Corps. The 28th Division occupied the left flank of the 32nd with the French 4th Division on the right. Following initial offensive operations, the division was to relieve the 28th Division completely, at which point the left flank advance fell to the US 4th and 42nd divisions. The 32nd would then proceed twelve kilometers

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<sup>63</sup> Glenn W. Garlock, *Tales of the Thirty-second* (West Salem, WI: Badger Pub. Co. 1927), 70.

<sup>64</sup> Joint War Commissions, *The 32nd Division in the World War, 1917-1919*, 53.

<sup>65</sup> Hann, *The Division as a Fighting Machine*, 9.

north to the Chery-Chartreuve-Bruys line, hold, and send an advanced guard to the town of Mont St. Martin in preparation for further offensive operations.<sup>66</sup>

After visualizing this broad concept and conferring with adjacent units, General Haan and his staff planned for immediate attack. Upon relieving the US 3rd Division, elements of the 64th Brigade became engaged by Germans entrenched in the Bois des Grimpettes, a fortified position in a clump of woods directly to the division's front. The 28th Division remained in the fight in order to assist the 32nd in achieving its initial march objectives. Understanding that initiative hung in the balance, General Haan ordered the 64th Brigade to attack following an intense coordinated massing of fires from the 3rd and 28th Division Artillery Brigades. As artillery barrages echeloned forward, the 64th Brigade began the advance and dislodged the heavily fortified German positions. This facilitated the 28th Division's advance on the left, however the 64th became decisively engaged from adjacent woods near Cierges itself and the advance slowed. Recognizing the decreased tempo, German forces launched a series of counterattacks that failed, yet covered their retreat to a more advantageous position.

Following the initial assault, General Haan ordered the 63rd Brigade forward to replace the 28th Division. The 32nd Division now occupied the entire front of the 38th French Corps previously occupied by two divisions.<sup>67</sup> The dislodged German units entrenched in depth on the high ground near Hill 230 and the town of Les Jomblettes, with defensive positions extending to the Bois Pelger and Bellevue Farm. Recognizing that the Ourcq River Valley and sloping terrain favored German positions, General Haan developed a plan of attack in conjunction with the 42nd Division on his left and the French 4th Division on the right. While the 42nd Division held its position and provided artillery support, the 32nd advanced under the cover provided and rapidly

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<sup>66</sup> American Battle Monuments Commission, *32d Division Summary of Operations in the World War*, 9.

<sup>67</sup> Joint War Commissions, *The 32nd Division in the World War, 1917-1919*, 58.

reached Les Jomblettes and Cierges. Occupation of the key terrain allowed for clearance of the Bois Pelger, enabling the 42nd Division to advance. The French 4th Division failed to advance as rapidly however, and upon reaching Hill 230 the 32nd began receiving effective fire from its exposed flank. Unable to straighten the line, General Haan ordered the division to fall back on the reverse slope of Hill 230.

The German line remained intact and its commanders intended to hold the position at all costs. General Haan now faced a determined enemy that would test the divisions's ability to sustain effort and press the offensive.<sup>68</sup> Displacing the Germans from the high ground extending across the sector forced an immediate retreat due to the lack of defensible terrain between the Ourcq and Vesle Rivers. Utilizing the cover of darkness, the French 4th Division moved forward and joined the portion of the line that previously exposed the 32nd's right flank. The division staff disseminated orders for attack the following morning and coordinated the movement with both adjacent divisions. Instead of attacking the line frontally, General Haan devised a plan to envelop Hill 230 by converging attacks from Cierges and Bellevue Farm. Despite heavy resistance, the plan succeeded and by August 2, German forces retreated with the 32nd in rapid pursuit.<sup>69</sup>

The Germans successfully withdrew, but maintained rear-guard units of well-trained infantry.<sup>70</sup> This allowed for the crossing of the Vesle River, and after receiving effective machine gun and artillery fire, General Haan pulled pursuit forces back in order to consolidate for a more coordinated attack. On August 3, the attack resumed amidst increased resistance, particularly from the division's left flank due to the 42nd Division's slower advance. However, with the Germans in retreat, General Haan capitalized on the opportunity provided by increased tempo and the division pushed forward. On August 5, the division attacked into the town of Fismes and moved to the

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<sup>68</sup> Joint War Commissions, *The 32nd Division in the World War, 1917-1919*, 63.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>70</sup> Barry, *The Midwest Goes to War: The 32nd Division in the Great War*, 50.

southern bank of the Vesle River. Although the 32nd prepared for an opposed river crossing, it became clear that a deliberate corps attack was required to dislodge the German forces. After nine days of fighting and driving the enemy back nineteen kilometers, the 28th Division relieved the 32nd Division in Fismes.

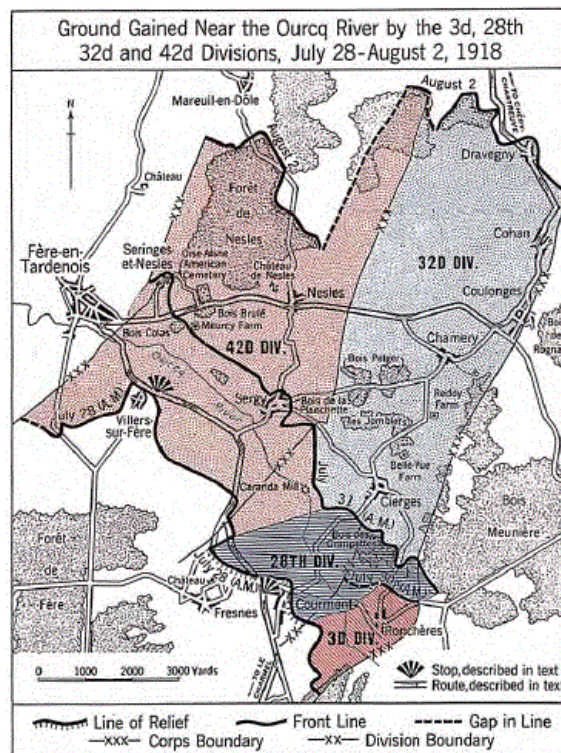


Figure 3. 32nd at Aisne-Marne. US Army Center of Military History, *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe: A History, Guide, and Reference Book*, CMH Publication 23-24 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1992), 68.

Throughout the offensive, General Haan and his staff developed plans that capitalized on the combined arms capability of the division and the fighting spirit ingrained in each of the brigades. However, massing fires and following the effect with troops is only a simple tactic, well coordinated in time and space once mastered. The key to success in Haan's view relied upon a broader visualization of the battlefield and how the 32nd Division interacted with elements of the system overall. Combined with an understanding that war is a pulsation of violence that varies in strength and speed, General Haan used simple fire and maneuver tactics within a specific

frequency.<sup>71</sup> The frequency of attack, hold, and prepare to attack again developed a tempo of events that raised opportunities for exploitation.<sup>72</sup>

The ability to perceive opportunity stemmed from General Haan's command philosophy; however, the ability to use it resulted from his proficient staff. Staff officers trained in the American Staff College proved critical in the timely and effective translation of General Haan's visualization into action. As a result, the 32nd Division earned the name "Les Terribles" and a reputation as a unit of shock troops capable of piercing any line.<sup>73</sup>

### Les Terribles: Oise – Aisne, 28 August 1918 – 02 September 1918

The division suffered 3,798 losses from all causes during Aisne-Marne and required time to rest and re-fit.<sup>74</sup> Following relief by the 28th Division on the Vesle, the 32nd shifted to the US III Corps reserve, French 6th Army, and moved to a position between Dravegny and Cierges.<sup>75</sup> While in reserve, General Haan and the staff reviewed the combat action as a whole and immediately developed a training plan to address shortfalls. From August 7-23, the division recalibrated weapons systems, instructed soldiers on the use of German weapons, and conducted tactical problems that integrated tanks and aerial reconnaissance. Having successfully integrated artillery to

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<sup>71</sup> Carl Von Clausewitz, translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, *On War* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1976), 98.

<sup>72</sup> Robert R. Leonhard, *Fighting by Minutes: Time and the Art of War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 10-11. Leonhard's work provides an insightful discussion on the temporal aspects of war. In doing so, he creates a model that focuses on time as the critical component that controls all other aspects. In conjunction with Clausewitz's theoretical understanding of war's varying pulsations, one gains an understanding of how the 32nd Division gained and maintained initiative on the Western Front.

<sup>73</sup> Les Terribles is French for "The Terrible Ones." The 32nd was first referred to as Les Terribles by General de Mondesir, the 38th French Corps Commander as he watched the battle of Fismes unfold. General Mangin, commander of the French 10th Army heard of the name and referred to the division as Les Terribles when he requested the division for action in the Oise-Aisne Offensive. The nickname became official when used in a citation after actions in Juvigny.

<sup>74</sup> American Battle Monuments Commission, *32d Division Summary of Operations in the World War*, 22.

<sup>75</sup> *Order of Battle*, 183.

enable maneuver, General Haan intended to use additional combat multipliers to increase speed and shock.

The Aisne-Marne Offensive developed a reputation for the 32nd as shock troops capable of piercing the toughest German lines.<sup>76</sup> While the division trained, British and French forces began an offensive against the Somme River. Initial attacks met success leading to the extension of the offensive to the Oise River. On August 18, the French 10th Army began the Oise-Ainse Offensive with the intent of forcing the Germans out of their defensive positions along the Vesle and Aisne Rivers.

Two weeks after becoming a reserve force, the division abruptly received orders to report to the French 10th Corps under General Mangin. After completing the initial phase of the Oise-Ainse Offensive, Mangin requested an American division for assistance in the second thrust. General Pershing offered the French three divisions and General Mangin quickly chose the 32nd due to his observations and unit reputation. On August 24, three-hundred trucks driven by Vietnamese transported the division to an area northwest of Soissons.<sup>77</sup> Upon arrival, duties as the 10th Army reserve began as operations continued.

The second phase of the Oise-Ainse Offensive aimed to turn the German positions behind the Ainse and Vesle Rivers, rendering the defensive line untenable and forcing a withdrawal.<sup>78</sup> The French 127th Division attempted to increase their position west of Juvigny on August 27, however it met significant resistance and the advanced stalled. General Mangin ordered the 32nd to relieve the 127th and continue the assault in order to capture the high ground west of Juvigny. In conjunction with the 32nd's assault as the main effort, the French 64th and 66th divisions would

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<sup>76</sup> Joint War Commissions, *The 32nd Division in the World War, 1917-1919*, 70.

<sup>77</sup> Barry, *The Midwest Goes to War: The 32nd Division in the Great War*, 73.

<sup>78</sup> A turning movement is a military tactic in which an attacker's forces reach the rear of a defender's forces, separating the defenders from their principal defensive positions and threatening to place them in a pocket. The defenders must then abandon these positions.

attack north of Juvigny while the French 59th Division attacked to its south. General Haan and his staff developed a plan and quickly disseminated orders to the brigade commanders, ensuring liaison with adjacent units created shared understanding across the entire line. The relief of the 127th occurred in an orderly fashion and with considerable speed compared to entering the lines of Aïnse-Marne. The 63rd Brigade assumed the front with the 64th Brigade in reserve and the 57th Artillery Brigade in support. Following the relief, General Mangin requested that the 32nd assist in an immediate assault to support the French 59th Division in the south. Intent of the limited advance aimed to push the German line back in order to capture a rail-line fifteen-hundred meters west of Juvigny. The associated embankment would serve as a line of departure for further operations.<sup>79</sup>

Five hours after assuming the line and at the exact moment General Haan officially assumed command of the sector, the 63rd Brigade began its assault with the French 59th Division. Utilizing artillery to cover the division's movement, the 63rd quickly reached its objective and captured the German positions along the rail-line to their front with minimal casualties.<sup>80</sup> The French 59th Division's advance met less success, leaving the front line elements of the 32nd exposed on the right flank and on high sloping ground directly in front of elevated terrain entrenched by German forces. With little cover, casualties began to increase and abandoning the position meant endangering the French. General Haan ordered the 63rd Brigade to hold and attempted to relieve the mounting pressure with artillery. As this occurred, the Germans identified the seam and launched a counter attack from the Bois de Curonine, a wooded area on the high ground facing the boundary separating the 32nd and French 59th Divisions. The French immediately fell back forcing elements of the 32nd to move as well in order to maintain liaison.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Barry, *The Midwest Goes to War: The 32nd Division in the Great War*, 74.

<sup>80</sup> Joint War Commissions, *The 32nd Division in the World War, 1917-1919*, 77.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

However, through coordinated artillery and tenacity by both divisions, the attack met failure and the allied line held.

The initial attack began a continuous fight that lasted for five days and would test General Haan and the staff's ability to apply tempo flexibly and leverage combat power to maneuver. Unlike the Aisne-Marne Offensive, the scheme of maneuver developed by General Mangin called for continuous advance with each division moving three kilometers per hour. However, realities of the battlefield stifled this approach almost immediately. On August 29, an attack by the entire French Army commenced to break through the resilient German lines spanning the high ground facing the three division's. In preparation, artillery barrages commenced on the night of the 29th and two companies of tanks and a troop of Moroccan Cavalry attached to the 32nd division.<sup>82</sup> Under a rolling barrage of artillery, the attack commenced and met fierce resistance across the entire front.

Although the attached tank companies pierced the German lines in many places, they became disabled prior to the infantry being able to capitalize on their success. The plateau afforded the German positions numerous cave structures which allowed them to weather the Allied artillery. The intent of driving three kilometers a day became untenable, yet the initial shock resulted in the German forces deciding to withdraw. Leaving rear guard units to cover the withdrawal, the division's forward units continued to receive effective fire in the sloping and open positions. Maintaining their locations meant increased casualties, and after inspecting the lines personally General Haan decided to pull elements to the rear, leaving only observation posts forward. As well, he requested that the attack on Juvigny commence immediately and preparations for the attack began. Due to heavy losses, the 64th Brigade replaced the 63rd and the French 64th Division transitioned with the French 66th Division on the left flank. The French 59th Division remained on

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<sup>82</sup> Joint War Commissions, *The 32nd Division in the World War, 1917-1919*, 83.



the right. However, General Mangin decided to delay the attack until August 30 and the order never came.

The decision not to attack left the 32nd exposed and suffering heavily.<sup>83</sup> General Mangin intended to continue the attack on August 31, however he issued the order to advance if the situation permitted.<sup>84</sup> General Haan and the staff deduced that continuing the offensive was the only way to mitigate the untenable position currently held. While planning continued, the staff received word from the French 59th Division that a weakness in the German lines presented itself on their right flank, and they anticipated success in exploiting it. Recognizing an opportunity to continue the advance, General Haan ordered the attack on Juvigny.

The attack on Juvigny developed rapidly and required General Haan and his staff to react accordingly. When the attack commenced, the French 59th Division continued to make progress on the right flank in conjunction with the 64th Brigade. The advance into the Bois de Curonine succeeded, however the attack on the far left flank by the French 66th Division met fierce resistance and stalled. General Haan ordered the right to continue while maintaining liaison with the French on the left and visualized a turning movement with Juvigny in the pocket. Following the initial assault, the French 59th in conjunction with the 32nd nearly surrounded the town, driving German forces further to the north. Subsequent assaults succeeded in surrounding the town completely, allowing for the town to be cleared and defensive positions fortified. The success of taking Juvigny from the south resulted from German concentration on the French 66th Division which remained stalled to the west. On August 31, the success of the 32nd's advance on Juvigny placed it in considerable advance of the flanking divisions.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Joint War Commissions, *The 32nd Division in the World War, 1917-1919*, 85.

<sup>84</sup> American Battle Monuments Commission, *32d Division Summary of Operations in the World War*, 28.

<sup>85</sup> Joint War Commissions, *The 32nd Division in the World War, 1917-1919*, 83.

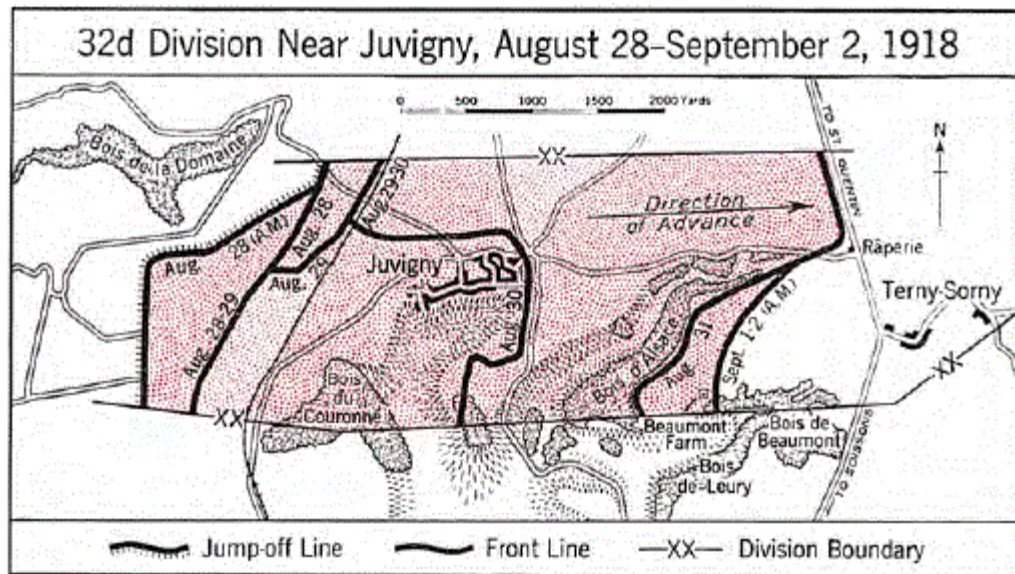


Figure 4. 32nd in Oise-Aisne. US Army Center of Military History, *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe: A History, Guide, and Reference Book*, CMH Publication 23-24 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1992), 91.

To straighten the lines, General Mangin ordered a subsequent attack on August 31 following the capture of Juvigny. To facilitate the attack, all artillery attached to the 32nd and the corps staff ordered a four-hour barrage. In conferring with the artillery brigades, General Haan devised the novel concept of a triple barrage. German forces adapted to the rolling barrages typically used, rendering them less effective unless the infantry followed in close proximity. A double barrage met some success when used by the French divisions, however this became less effective over time as the Germans more skillfully used caves within their trench systems.<sup>86</sup> The staff created a meticulous plan that coordinated fires and maneuver across a non-linear front line. Covering one and a half kilometers, the triple barrage would apply continuous artillery in both the deep and close fight, allowing the left to advance forward to straighten the line. Once connected, the deep and close fires were to shift with the entire line advancing to Terny-Sorny. The triple barrage worked as planned, causing confusion in the German ranks and allowing the 32nd to advance rapidly. On the night of September 1-2, the 1<sup>st</sup> Moroccan Division relieved the 32nd near

<sup>86</sup> Joint War Commissions, *The 32nd Division in the World War, 1917-1919*, 84.

Terny-Sorny. Despite heavy casualties and five days of continuous fighting, the 32nd penetrated a key defensive position and paved the way forward for the entire French 10th Army.

The division's successes in the Oise-Aisne Offensive identify critical developments in the organization as a whole. The problem set faced by General Haan and his staff appeared similar to the previous offensive, however the adapting enemy required flexibility in visualization and action often at a moment's notice. Upon entering the fight, the enemy used the dominant terrain to maintain constant contact with the three divisions that comprised the line. Using tempo in the successful frequency seen in the Aisne-Marne Offensive resulted in leaving elements exposed to continuous fire. Attacking, holding, and preparing for another attack yielded initiative to enemy forces who utilized the dominant terrain. As well, rolling barrages of artillery provided diminishing results due to German adaptation to the combined arms tactics previously used. General Haan's ability to reflect in the midst of action without stopping it altogether allowed for the capitalization on opportunity.<sup>87</sup> He accomplished this by adjusting tempo to a higher frequency of almost continuous attack while modifying the use of fires to achieve the desired effect. In doing so, he compressed the timeframe of decision making by German forces, thereby decreasing their capacity to measure, assess, and react.<sup>88</sup> As a result, the 32nd received no artillery fire upon entering Juvigny on account that it took the German command five hours to determine it had fallen into allied hands.

Like the previous offensive, the staff played a critical role in translating General Haan's vision into action. Aisne-Marne produced a staff capable of achieving this translation within a frequency of operations that allowed for anticipation. Oise-Aisne truly tested their ability by increasing tempo and presenting unanticipated friction. The command element completed their second offensive having experienced the various problems open warfare doctrine produced. Due to

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<sup>87</sup> Donald A. Schon, *Educating the Reluctant Practitioner: Towards a New Design for Teaching and Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1987). 30.

<sup>88</sup> Everett Carl Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Principle in the Space and Information Age* (London: Cass, 2005), 67.

the training and development of the division as a learning organization since its inception, they entered their last and greatest battle with the ability to adapt, anticipate, and remain flexible.

General Haan recognized the change, reflecting in his personal account that,

Everything began to move more smoothly, and orders given by the Division Commander were immediately visualized by the corresponding movement of the elements of the Division called upon to move. Everywhere was order, and everything was done in an orderly manner; it was businesslike.<sup>89</sup>

## Fighting Machine: Meuse–Argonne, 26 September 1918 – 11 November 1918

Following relief by the 10th Moroccan Division, the 32nd Division moved to the secondary line and remained there until September 6.<sup>90</sup> Having faced five German divisions, the 32nd again required rest and recuperation. While in reserve of the French 10th Army, critically needed replacements began to arrive and rumors of a future offensive circulated. Marshal Ferdinand Foch, Commander of all Allied forces, intended to capitalize on the successful operations conducted in response to the German spring offensives. Planning for an offensive along the entire Western Front began while the 32nd executed operations in Oise-Aisne. American divisions fought under British and French control since entering the war; however, General Pershing's steadfast resolve in creating an independent American army led to the creation of the American First Army on August 10. In early September, General Pershing and Marshall Foch agreed upon conducting an offensive to reduce the St. Mihiel salient. A part of the agreement included limiting the objectives of the offensive so the American army could participate in another offensive on the front between the Meuse River and the Argonne Forest.<sup>91</sup> The agreement placed significant strain on AEF forces then

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<sup>89</sup> Hann, *The Division as a Fighting Machine*, 10.

<sup>90</sup> American Battle Monuments Commission, *32d Division Summary of Operations in the World War*, 31.

<sup>91</sup> US Army Center of Military History, *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe: A History, Guide, and Reference Book*, CMH Publication 23-24 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1992), 107

required to conduct an offensive on September 12 and immediately reposition for another offensive on September 26 over forty miles away. Overall, the intent was a massive converging attack on the Western Front, and the First American Army would direct its attack against the most vital points in the German defensive lines.

The 32nd Division remained in reserve during the St. Mihiel Offensive, using the time to train five thousand replacements received to fill the depleted infantry brigades. Following St. Mihiel, General Haan received orders to assume the reserve of 5th Corps, First Army. The 32nd then moved toward Verdun on September 22 eventually positioning in the Forêt de Hesse on September 26, a position four kilometers south of the front line.<sup>92</sup> General Pershing arranged the AEF in three corps comprised in total of sixteen infantry divisions and ten American and French artillery brigades.<sup>93</sup> The initial plan called for an attack by nine divisions on September 26. Fifth Corps would lead the main strike, advancing on Montfaucon and then the Kreimhilde Stellung. Third Corps occupied the right flank with the task of attacking along the west bank of the Meuse River. First Corps occupied the left flank with the task of clearing the Argonne Forest and the Ais River Valley.<sup>94</sup> General Pershing developed a three-phased attack in which speed was paramount. The first phase intended to disrupt the German main defensive system along the Kriemhilde Stellung through a seven mile advance. This would capture Montfaucon while simultaneously clearing the Argonne forest and allowing for further advance into the heights of Romagne. The second phase required another ten-mile drive north of Romagne to outflank German defenses to the west and open the way to Mezieres. First Army would attack across the Meuse in phase three, cutting the primary German railway and forcing a retreat into Germany.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> *Order of Battle*, 185.

<sup>93</sup> Edward G. Lengel, *To Conquer Hell: The Meuse-Argonne, 1918* (New York: H. Holt, 2008), 62.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

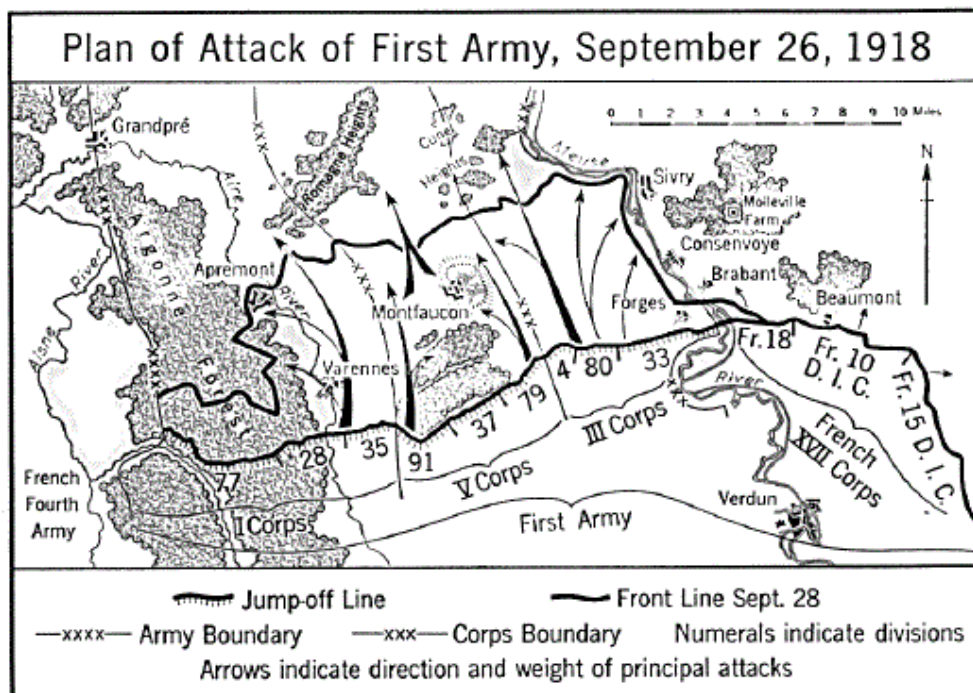


Figure 5. First Army Plan of Attack, September 26, 1918. US Army Center of Military History, *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe: A History, Guide, and Reference Book*, CMH Publication 23-24 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1992), 172.

When the assault began on September 26, General Haan moved the Division forward to the original front lines of 5th Corps and prepared to support any of the three divisions in the advance. Anticipating a call for support, brigade commanders and the command staff reconnoitered the best possible routes for rapid movement to the front. Initial reports stated significant gains were dwindling in the face of increased German resistance and the division received orders to replace the 37th Division on the night of September 29. With little illumination and amidst cold and rainy conditions, General Haan personally led the division on an eleven mile march across what previously was no mans land.<sup>96</sup> The staff occupied the headquarters of the 37th Division while the 63rd Brigade occupied the line. By the morning of October 1, the 32nd occupied the entire front previously held by the 37th. General Haan immediately ordered the attack in order to secure better positions, and on the evening of October 1 the line moved forward of the town Cierges.

<sup>96</sup> Joint War Commissions, *The 32nd Division in the World War, 1917-1919*, 93.

Of the nine divisions involved in the initial attack, only three had any serious combat experience.<sup>97</sup> Due to the St. Mihiel Offensive, General Pershing and the First Army staff were forced to use inexperienced divisions out of necessity. The inexperience showed as the initial advanced yielded marginal gains, causing General Pershing to replace many of the divisions early on. On October 4, the 32nd received orders to replace the 91st Division to its left. The 3rd Division then occupied Cierges while the 1st Division occupied the 32nd's former position. With his veteran divisions in place, General Pershing ordered the continuation of the attack.<sup>98</sup>

From October 4-10, the 32nd fought a series battles in the advance towards the Hindenburg line. Using the lessons learned in previous offensives to include the incorporation of tanks, General Haan used the combined arms capability of the division to gain five kilometers over open ground. Following the capture of Gesnes and clearing the Bois de la Morine, the division aligned directly in front of the strongest position of the Kriemhilde Stellung, Cote Dame Marie. The position formed a crescent shaped ridge a mile west of the village of Romagne and consisted of three hills each with entrenched German forces. General Haan devoted October 8 to positioning forces for the attack. The staff created special maneuver maps and distributed them to all commanders to ensure all officers operated with the same operational picture. The attack commenced on October 9 following an artillery barrage and continued to pulse through October 10. The initial push incurred heavy casualties and the division succeeded in only reaching the base of Cote Dame Marie.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Lengel, *To Conquer Hell: The Meuse-Argonne, 1918*, 62.

<sup>98</sup> Barry, *The Midwest Goes to War: The 32nd Division in the Great War*, 96.; Ibid., 160.

<sup>99</sup> Lengel, *To Conquer Hell: The Meuse-Argonne, 1918*, 292.



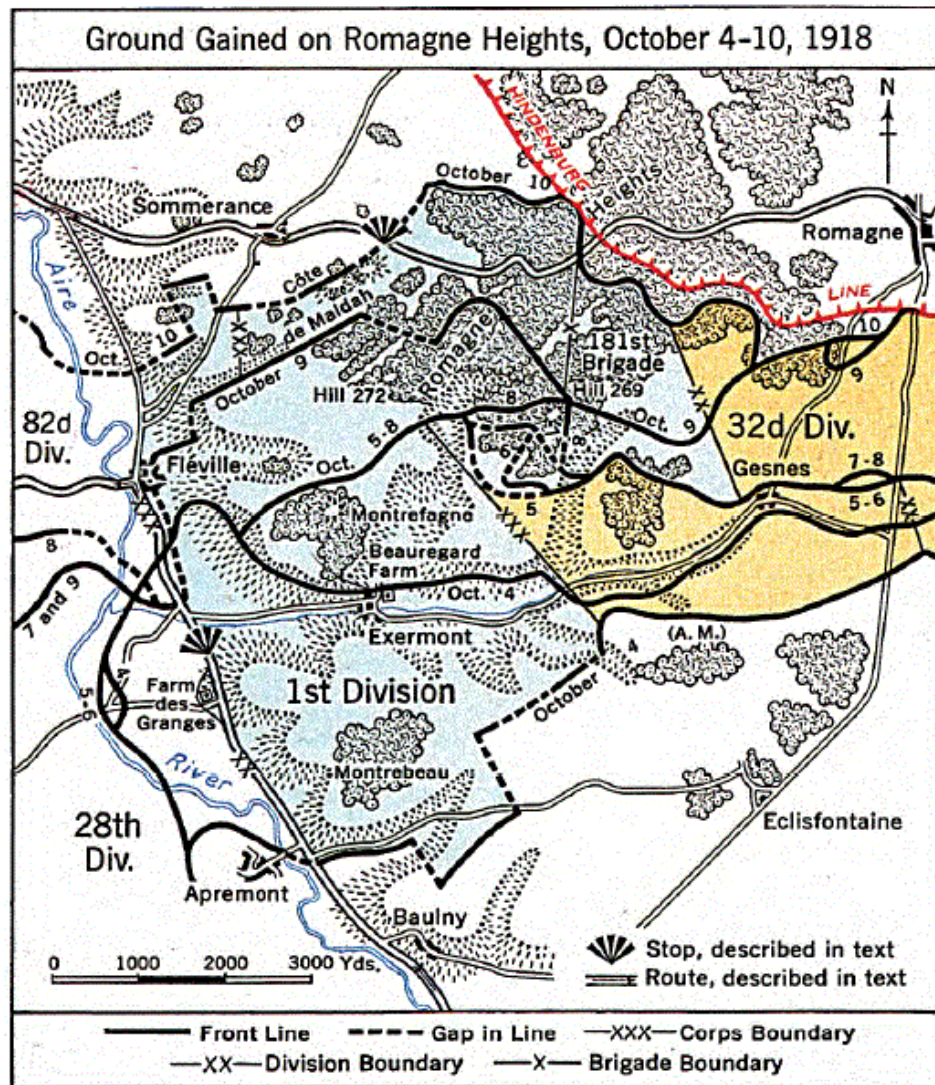


Figure 6. Ground Gained, October 4-10, 1918. US Army Center of Military History, *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe: A History, Guide, and Reference Book*, CMH Publication 23-24 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1992), 226.

The division devoted much of October 11-13 to preparing for the next attack on Cote Dame Marie. Local operations continued in the meantime with sporadic and sometimes bloody encounters. During this period the 42nd Division replaced the 1st Division due to the heavy losses incurred on the attack towards the line. At 0530 on October 14, General Haan ordered the second attack on the stronghold facing the division.<sup>100</sup> The plan called for a heavy artillery barrage, closely

<sup>100</sup> General Haan actually received word that Cote Dame Marie had already been captured before the October 14 attack. Further investigation proved this was untrue on the 13<sup>th</sup>, after the report had been sent to



followed by both brigades. Because a frontal assault meant almost immediate failure, the attack focused on driving up the eastern and western slopes of Cote Dame Marie with one brigade while the other focused on taking the village of Romange itself.<sup>101</sup>

The attack proceeded in a costly yet ultimately successful manner. Elements of the 64<sup>th</sup> Brigade successfully outflanked the German trenches to the west and entered Romagne. As this occurred, the 63<sup>rd</sup> Brigade captured a critical hilltop to the east through a bitter fight and Cote Dame Marie began to crumble. When German forces began to retreat from the pocket created, the division surged up the middle and secured the position overall. After three weeks of bitter fighting by the First Army, the 32nd became the first division to break through the Hindenburg line at its strongest point.<sup>102</sup> The fighting continued through October 19 as the division continued forward until the lines extended two kilometers north of Romagne. The 89th Division relieved the 32nd on the night of October 19, and General Haan moved his troops back to the original line of September 26. Here he learned that in the penetration of the Kriemhilde Stellung the division faced eleven German divisions in three weeks. At the cost of 6,046 men, the 32nd Division lived up to its reputation as a skilled unit of shock troops.

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5<sup>th</sup> Corps. Realizing he had misinformed higher command, Haan resolved to break the line at all costs on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 336.

<sup>102</sup> Joint War Commissions, *The 32nd Division in the World War, 1917-1919*, 93.

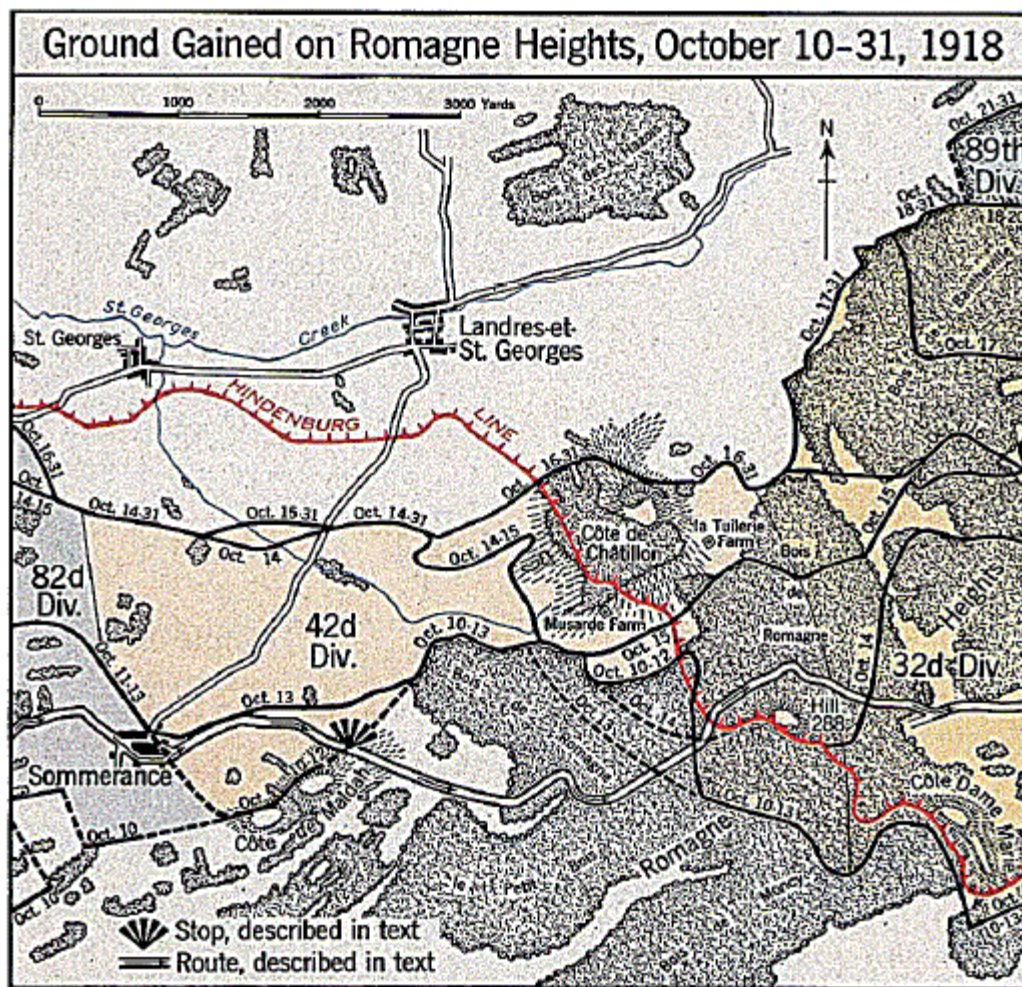


Figure 6. Ground Gained, October 10-31, 1918. US Army Center of Military History, *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe: A History, Guide, and Reference Book*, CMH Publication 23-24 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1992), 242.

The 32nd Division assumed the responsibilities as the 5th Corps reserve through November 1, at which time it transferred to 3rd Corps reserve in preparation for the next phase of the offensive. Third Corps immediately began their attack along the left bank of the Meuse River with the 32nd following in close support. On November 4, the 5th Division forced a crossing at Dun-sur-Meuse and successfully formed a bridgehead. The intent aimed at connecting with the French and American divisions moving up the other side of the bank. The crossing dispersed the 5th Division widely, and on October 5 a regiment from the 32nd moved forward to cross the Meuse in support. The regiment successfully crossed and assumed a position on the 5th Division's right flank. The

regiment then attacked and captured the town of Brandeville, successfully connecting with the 17th French Colonial Division.<sup>103</sup>

The rest of the division crossed the Meuse on the night of November 9 unopposed. After crossing, the detached regiment rejoined and Third Corps ordered the 32nd to attack the following day in pursuit of German forces in retreat.<sup>104</sup> General Haan and the staff developed a plan that placed the division in pursuit formation and the attack commenced on November 10. Heavy fog masked movement, and the 64th Brigade made rapid progress. However, as the fog lifted front line elements found themselves among numerous enemy positions and without liaison with adjacent units. It soon became apparent that German forces had no intention of retreating.

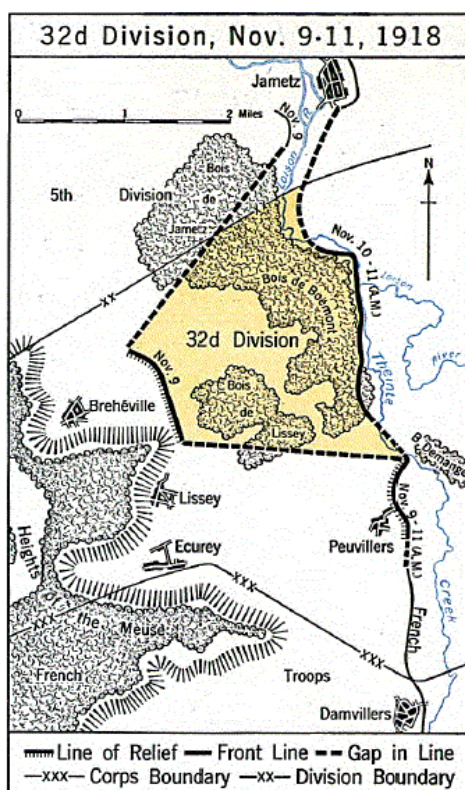


Figure 7. Advance of November 9-11. US Army Center of Military History, *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe: A History, Guide, and Reference Book*, CMH Publication 23-24 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1992), 242.

<sup>103</sup> Joint War Commissions, *The 32nd Division in the World War, 1917-1919*, 121.

<sup>104</sup> American Battle Monuments Commission, *32d Division Summary of Operations in the World War*, 65.

The division advanced three kilometers during the day of November 10. The Corps issued instructions to continue the attack on November 11 and General Haan realigned units in preparation for another assault. The attack order commenced the assault at 0700, and the preparatory artillery began at 0630. Shortly after the attack started, runners arrived on the lines with notification that an armistice was in place. It took the division another three hours to stop the attack altogether.

The Meuse-Argonne Offensive required General Haan and his staff to adapt, anticipate, and remain flexible at every juncture. Careful use of combined arms capabilities and tempo coalesced with the lessons learned from the previous offensives. General Haan recounts this in his memoir, stating:

It may be asked in passing why a Division is organized in such great depth. Primarily this is necessary to give great and continuous driving power. It is a sort of revolving machine where in turn each succeeding echelon passes over the front line and is thus able to give a new impetus to the forward movement of the great machine.<sup>105</sup>

The staff's ability to translate vision into action amidst considerable friction provided subordinate units with enough information and enough flexibility to use their own initiative. Despite numerous casualties and hardships, the division's ability to pierce any line it faced solidified its reputation. General Haan had succeeded in creating a fighting machine.

## Conclusion

The performance of the 32nd Division significantly contrasts with the historical execution of militia and National Guard units prior to 1917. Although National Guard divisions performed at varying degrees like their Regular and National Army counterparts, the accomplishments of the 32<sup>nd</sup> provides important lessons in leadership, training, and staff capabilities when mobilizing. Using the division's actions as a case study, recommendations arise for current problem sets faced by the National Guard.

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<sup>105</sup> Hann, *The Division as a Fighting Machine*, 20.

The division's preparation for combat and initial baptism of fire highlights the importance of standardizing training for both Soldiers and Officers. Critical to accomplishing this was General Haan's dissemination of a clear philosophy, implemented only after subordinate leaders provided input. Further, his visualization of the division as a system provided him with a critical mental model that cultivated a deeper understanding. Specifically, understanding the interconnectivity of each unit within the organization allowed him to capitalize on various capabilities quickly, adapting the division to unanticipated friction. Translating the commander's vision fell on an inexperienced staff, however throughout the training period and initial actions in Alsace the staff rapidly developed its capability. The 32nd entered its first offensive with well-trained Soldiers and a command team capable of arranging actions in time, space, and purpose.

Aisne-Marne provided the first true test for General Haan and the staff. Having built a proficient baseline within the division, the eight-day offensive provides an example of how learning organizations adapt, anticipate, and remain flexible. General Haan and the staff personified this through the use of tempo and frequency. As well, exploiting resources and knowledge in new ways emerged from the use of combat multipliers at all times to enable maneuver.<sup>106</sup> A natural byproduct of this is greater staff proficiency. The tempo of operations required the staff to disseminate information quickly and in a succinct manner. In conjunction with a commander capable of visualizing the broader fight and units trained to a high standard, the increasingly capable staff connected the two. This resulted in subordinate units understanding commanders intent and able to exercise initiative when needed.

The Oise-Aisne Offensive further developed the division across the three lines previously discussed. Importantly, instead of a steady pulsation of offense in pursuit of a retreating enemy, the capture of Juvigny occurred after five days of continuous fighting. This posed new frictions

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<sup>106</sup> Mary Jo Hatch, and Ann L. Cunliffe, *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic, and Postmodern Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 313.

requiring increased speed and proficiency in rapidly producing action as the fight developed. Exploration into new ideas resulted, and the division overcame a deeply entrenched enemy through recognition of the system's adaptation.

An important aspect of the division's combat actions resides in the fact that it never operated at full strength, and in many cases units barely crested fifty percent. Replacement soldiers often arrived without any experience only weeks prior to another offensive. Despite the lack of manning the division continued to penetrate every line it faced. This further proves the critical and powerful momentum produced by a unit with a commander capable of holistic thinking, a high standard of training at all levels, and a proficient staff that provides the bridge.<sup>107</sup>

The Meuse-Argonne Offensive tested the division's capability to the fullest extent and across all forms of open warfare. General Pershing demonstrated his confidence in the 32nd early on following the stalled attacks by less experienced divisions by placing them on the line with two other proven units. Using all of the lessons learned, capitalizing on combined arms, and through sheer tenacity, the division pushed forward and broke through a seemingly impenetrable line. Fourteen months after marginally trained units from two states conglomerated, a fighting machine of citizen-soldiers hastened the eventual defeat of Germany in a significant way.

When thinking about National Guard mobilization and developing ways to ensure sustained readiness, World War I rarely comes to mind. The natural propensity to look for lessons in more recent conflicts often overshadows the vast lessons of the past. This case study of the 32nd Division's actions in the Great War provides valuable lessons for planners today. The primary lessons focus on expanding staff officer capability, ensuring these staffs routinely

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<sup>107</sup> Creating proficiency required General Haan to take a hard line with many of his officers. On April 7, 1918, Haan corresponded with Major General Crowder at the War Department, in which he stated he had relieved 82 officers in the last 60 days. He states "My training schedule for the officers calls for twelve hours of work a day, and the man who doesn't come up to the mark loses his job without further ceremony."

exercise in realistic scenarios, and the viewing of operational problems from a holistic and systems perspective.<sup>108</sup>

Rapid expansion accompanies National Guard mobilization in every scenario. Often, staffs only receive training equivalent to their Regular Army counterparts during the mobilization process. Bridging the capability gap this produces to ensure sustained readiness requires increased staff officer training. Increasing National Guard rotations through regional training centers to include the requisite mission command training is critical in the current environment where potential near-peer threats exist.

In conjunction with increasing capability through expanding training opportunities at the unit level, additional focus on individually developing staff officers capable of understanding complexity is paramount. The majority of National Guard officers attend the Command and General Staff Officer's Course through the distance-learning program. Increasing capability in this respect requires that a greater number of officers attend the staff college in person, allowing for deeper understanding through classroom participation and discussion.

Combining the two leads to greater proficiency, and develops officers more attune to the complexity faced on the battlefield. Over time, these officers then enter command positions better prepared to emulate the flexibility and adaptability exemplified by General Haan and the 32nd Division in World War One.

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<sup>108</sup> TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5-500, *The United States Army Commander's Appreciation and Campaign Design* (Fort Monroe, VA: US Army Training and Doctrine Command, 28 January 2008), 5.



## Appendix 1

### Thirty-Second Division Composition

<b>Composition</b>		
<b>63d Infantry Brigade</b>	<b>64th Infantry Brigade</b>	<b>57th Field Artillery Brigade</b>
125th Infantry 126th Infantry 120th Machine Gun Battalion	127th Infantry 128th Infantry 121st Machine Gun Battalion	119th Field Artillery (75) 120th Field Artillery (75) 121st Field Artillery (155) 107th Trench Mortar Battery
<b>Divisional Troops</b>		<b>Trains</b>
119th Machine Gun Battalion 107th Engineers 107th Field Signal Battalion Headquarters Troop		107th Train Headquarters and Military Police 107th Ammunition Train 107th Supply Train 107th Engineer Train 107th Sanitary Train (Ambulance Companies and Field Hospitals 125-128)

Thirty-Second Division War Department composition, July 18, 1917. Derived from American Battle Monuments Commission, *Thirty-Second Division Summary of Operations in the World War* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1943), 72, modified by author.



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